

Leonardo da Vinci
W. Hollar fecit 1645

COLNAGHI



Wenceslaus Hollar

A deformed couple facing each other, the man with busy hair, 1645

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WENCESLAUS HOLLAR, after LEONARDO DA VINCI
(Prague 1607 – 1677 London)

A DEFORMED COUPLE FACING EACH OTHER, THE MAN WITH BUSHY HAIR, 1645

Etching on laid paper
7.5 x 10.3 cm.; 3 x 4 in.

Signed and dated (upper centre): *Leonardo da Vinci inu: / W: Hollar fecit. 1645.*
First state of two

Provenance

German private collection.

Literature

R. Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607–1677*, Cambridge 1982, cat no. 1591.I.

S. Turner, *Wenceslaus Hollar: New Hollstein German engravings, etchings and woodcuts, 1400–1700*. Giulia Bartrum, vols. 1–9, 2009–2012, cat. no. 743.I.



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Hollar left his native Prague in 1627. He spent several years travelling and working in Germany before his patron, the Earl of Arundel brought him to London in 1636. It is during this time that Hollar engraved, amongst other works, the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci from the Arundel collection. During the civil wars, Hollar fought on the royalist side, after which he spent the years 1644-52 in Antwerp. Hollar's views of London form an important record of the city before the Great Fire of 1666. Among his most ambitious projects was a set of plates of women's costumes, entitled *Ornatus muliebris Anglicanus, or The severall habits of English women from the nobilities to the country woman* (1640). He was prolific and engraved a wide range of subjects, producing nearly 2,800 prints, numerous watercolours and many drawings.

This small, sharply observed plate sets two bust-length “grotesques” in strict profile confrontation, their faces exaggerated into a physiognomic dialogue. At left, a woman in a close cap and veil smiles faintly, her features caricatured through an elongated, hooked nose, protruding lower lip, and an emphatic, forward-thrust chin. Opposite, a man with frizzed, bushy hair laughs open-mouthed, exposing teeth; his nose is knife-sharp, the cheek and jawline cut into angular planes.

The print belongs to Hollar's Antwerp series after Leonardo's studies of “grotesque” heads. Hollar's etched line translates Leonardo's physiognomic “counter-images” of ideal beauty into crisply articulated form, using tight parallel hatching and short, stabbing strokes to model leathery skin, sagging flesh, and bony planes; diagonal background shading locks the profiles into sharp relief. Leonardos's original drawings circulated in the Arundel collection and are now largely in the Royal Collection, Windsor.

COLNAGHI

COLNAGHI *London*

26 BURY STREET, LONDON SW1Y 6AL
UNITED KINGDOM

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM

+44 (0)20 7491 7408

contact@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *Madrid*

CALLE GENERAL CASTAÑOS 9
PLANTA BAJA, DCHA.
28004 MADRID

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
BY APPOINTMENT

spain@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *New York*

23 EAST 67TH STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10065
USA

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM

+1 (917) 388-3825

newyork@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *Brussels*

RUE JACQUES JORDAENS 30
1000 BRUXELLES
BELGIUM

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

brussels@colnaghi.com